LINEAL ASCENDING TRACING METHOD WITH DOUBLE LOOP INVESTIGATION CYCLES

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The approach

The "lineal ascending tracing method with double-loop investigation cycles" is a valuable technique for family heritage projects. The insights provided below may benefit others facing challenges in their research. The author views this method as a, iterative approach that helps genealogists break through "brick walls."

It encourages researchers to explore collateral lines and the biographical details of related individuals before returning to the primary ancestor's biography as new information emerges.

Typically, this method involves creating biographical narratives of varying lengths and sketching temporary family trees for closely related individuals, such as siblings, spouses, or cousin. This process can yield additional insights into the family unit and may lead to the identification of a shared ancestor or provide to overcome research obstacles.

Methodology: The double loop approach

Loop 1: Moving off the ascending genealogical line for Collateral Research (Branching Out): When a direct (e.g., great-grandparent) cannot be found, the researcher temporarily stops searching for them and instead their siblings or cousins (collateral lines) and their offspring.

Loop 2: Community/Context Research (Associates): The researcher examines the "associates" of the target family, including business, associates, and neighbours with the same patronymic or familial matronymics, witnesses on deeds and, or sponsors for baptisms (similarly for people in the same social, business, sports, or local community orbit).

Lineal reintegration: Information discovered, like a birthplace on a sibling's record or a maiden name on a cousin's marriage record (refer to Francis Beaufort Palmer 1907, pp. 235-240, "Peerage Law in England: A Practical Treatise for Lawyers & Laymen" – regarded as a gold standard for genealogical evidence by the Crown's courts), is utilised to revisit the main obstacle, creating a "double loop" of inquiry that helps overcome dead ends.

Why this method breaks roadblocks

- **Missed context (overcoming blind spots):** Sometimes, the ancestor you're searching for may be "hidden" in plain sight. Investigating a neighbour who has moved to the same area reveal the elusive origin point. This is particularly significant when examining migrations from the early 20th century and later, as neighbours often migrated in groups and found also on the same ships record. Many of these neighbours may be connected and obscured by marriage surnames, which can be discovered through thorough research.

- **Documentation in collateral records**: A sibling or cousin may have a more detailed obituary or birth record, that mentions the parents or grandparents' names, which are missing for your direct ancestor.

- **Identifying maiden names**: If a marriage record for the target ancestor is missing, researching the spouses' siblings can often lead to finding the family, and thus, the maiden name.

- **Using DNA/records loop:** The process alternates between DNA evidence (e.g., matching with a descendant of a known sibling) and traditional record research (e.g., confirming through land records) until the connection is proven.

Key tips for practitioner success:

- **Re-examine everything:** Before starting, re-read all known records for the elusive ancestor, as new skills or knowledge might reveal overlooked details.

- **Use wildcard searches**: Search with variations of names (e.g., "G*est") (Guest, Ghest, Geest, Gest, Geste, Geast, Gheast), and check for - *phonetic spellings for personal as well as family names come by names.*

- **Focus on the uncommon:** When an ancestor has a common name, on identifying the most distinctive name among their children or spouses to streamline your search. In cases where multiple individuals share the same name, like "John Guest," look for timestamp evidence to accurately attribute their life spans and construct small family trees if they are located in the same area. If two or more individuals have similar life, they are most unlikely not to be brothers, but likely first cousins; therefore, search for a sibling to trace back to the parents and grandparents, as the grandparent may be the source of the shared name (i.e., a grandfather, e.g., John Guest). Additionally, local directories, newspaper articles, rent rolls, and land records can help clarify their distinctions when their life spans overlap and create a reliable 'mini' family tree outlines their relationships and identifies your lineage among similarly named relatives.

- **Check non-internet sources:** This is especially important for individuals born into the internet generations. Explore local history books land deeds, newspaper archives, professional guild and occupational historic records, as well as funeral home records.

- **Ethical considerations in genealogical research:** Genealogical research, like all anthropology methods, presents significant ethical dilemmas that researchers must navigate with care. Issues of privacy arise, in balancing documentation with individuals' rights to manage information. The concept of cultural ownership recognizes communities' rights to control the sharing of their genealogical knowledge. Moreover, narratives involve addressing conflicting claims regarding ancestry and relationships; these narratives can but require explanations for their coexistence or justifications for why one take precedence over the other in advancing your investigation. Additionally, one must consider how to acknowledge colonial legacies, understanding how historical power dynamics influence existing genealogical records. It is further essential to uphold the principle of "do no harm" in genealogical research, which is often neglected as historians strive to make their studies appealing, sometimes focusing on what is deemed a sinful past and perhaps overlooking the importance of multiple historical perspectives on that person's life and legacy.

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